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**Balancing the Books:  
Newspapers & the Postal Business of the Confederacy**  
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Abstract

Before the Civil War, the federal postal system was fiscally balanced. But only in the North did postal receipts exceed expenditures. During the War, the postal system of the Confederate States of America generated a surplus. How was this possible?

This paper begins with Missouri – the Border State – focusing upon the postal distribution of antebellum newspapers, upon the encouragement of a county press, and upon the inflammation of partisanship.

Analyzing what amounted to a ‘counter-reformation’ in Confederate States postal policy – especially with respect to newspapers – reveals essential ingredients to balancing the books.

This paper builds on Richard John’s assertion that the Civil War, in postal terms, began in 1835 with the Charleston *cordon sanitaire* preventing the spread of Northern abolitionist publications. With a comparison of pre- and post-war statistics, conclusions can be drawn about the overall role of newspapers in the mail. In addition, this paper will clarify and correct some current misconceptions about private contract for the transportation of the mail, shedding light on the local contribution to systematic growth.

Sources will include classic studies (Dietz for postal, Taft and Swindler for newspapers), recent scholarship in the ‘culture of information,’ and official government reports.